

**The New Woman Punished:  
Thomas Hardy's Heroines and Happiness in Victorian England**

by

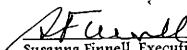
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## Introduction

To label Thomas Hardy a misogynist might be overstepping one's boundaries as a literary scholar, but adhering to the notion that he was a proto-feminist is to deny his ardent persecution of the "New Woman" of Victorian England. The new woman incurred the wrath and dislike of Hardy so much that he devoted a great amount of his novels to commenting on the problems which lie ahead in life for the new woman, warning her of its dangers and showing her the proper way to live. At first, it appeared that his personal experiences with women contributed the greatest amount to his treatment of women in his novels. Hardy recorded much of his life and recounted many situations where he interacted with women, but narrated no one event so harsh or shattering as to induce him to take revenge on their sex, nor did there exist any occurrences mirrored in major plot lines of his novels, though some became minor plots or scenes in the stories.

The personal experience angle gives credence to the idea that Hardy created social commentary with his sensational and, at times, controversial novels. Hardy's positions in relation to women in his life do shed light on the personal reasons behind the misogyny. Hardy used these novels as safety valves for releasing the tension and the frustration at being controlled by women throughout most of his lifetime. By the time he met and married his second wife Florence, who was more to Hardy's liking because she embodied a traditional Victorian woman much more than did his first wife Emma, Hardy had hung his author's hat and committed the rest of his literary life to the poetry he loved so much. The novels completed his catharsis by treating the independent, new woman so grimly that eventually none could return from the wicked

path they started down by asserting some control over their own lives. They could not escape the calamities which were to follow them everywhere they went.

Some argue that the novels displayed a feminism in Hardy just because he created independent female characters. He paraded smart, capable, self-reliant, confident women who attempted to rise above the constraints of their society. Critics would assert that he strove to engender sympathy for them among his readers because their lives ended tragically. The heroines' sacrifices might pave the way for real women to take a stand for their own sovereignty.

Hardy commented on the social standing of women, whether it be an independent thinker like Sue, a prim and proper Elizabeth-Jane, a beautiful yet naïve Tess, or the masculine and business-minded Bathsheba, to express his disapproval for the extent to which women were seizing authority in their relationships with men. Hardy, as the author and narrator, could control the lives of his heroines; what he wanted to happen to them did, and he manipulated their personalities and directed their choices in the plot to ensure that the ending he planned for them would take effect. As the author, he held the position of dictating the path each woman chose. He created them to be what he wanted them to be and to serve his agenda of social commentary and criticism.

## Thomas Hardy's Personal Life

Florence Emily Hardy, Thomas Hardy's second wife, compiled and edited Hardy's journals and notebooks to create his biography. To ensure that his eventual biography would accurately reflect his life story, he began keeping journals. [This was to combat some unauthorized accounts of his life which were already appearing (Hardy, F. vii).] Florence wrote what Hardy himself had written about his life, leaving for posterity and literary scholars an unobstructed look into Hardy's thoughts concerning his experiences. Scholars must have the ability to believe what Hardy wrote about his own life to be true, if they so choose to believe, because if not, the Hardy so many write about is not the Hardy who wrote *Jude the Obscure* and *The Woodlanders*, to name just a few.

Hardy dutifully records or remembers his experiences with women in his life. As a child, he spent most of his time around women. The lady of the manor, Mrs Julia Augusta Martin, loved to shower little Tommy with kisses, even when he became quite a big child (Millgate 46). Florence Hardy notes that the feelings he had for Mrs Martin were almost like that of a lover (Hardy, F. 24). He appeared to have no friends his age at his first school, because he was small and could work his lessons better than the older boys (Hardy, F. 21). He and his mother devoted themselves to each other and Hardy became, essentially, a "mama's boy."

Hardy's mother exerted much control over Hardy's early life. When he was a small boy, Hardy used to play the violin at parties for entertainment. His mother instructed him not to accept any payment for his services, even though the patrons often offered him money. He obeyed his mother, except for the one time he accepted money in order to buy a book he coveted from the dime store in town. Surely Hardy

must have disobeyed his mother in other circumstances, but he records this display of defiance of motherly authority specifically. Mrs Hardy and Mrs Martin quarreled over where Hardy ought to go to school. Though little Tommy had grown very fond of Mrs Martin, his mother chose to send him to another school.

As he grew older and he began to see girls other than his older sister Mary, with whom he also spent much of his time, his shyness emerged. He fell madly in love with a girl he had never met. He saw her only three times: once, riding on a horse; the second, walking alone; the third, walking with a boy older than she. He spent many weeks trying to get over his infatuation and would constantly be looking around for her. He met another girl, this one with red hair, who was three years older than he, but she snubbed him and married someone else. Later on, an attachment to a farmer's daughter brought nothing but a "Good evening" from him once. He could not muster up the courage to speak with her though he managed to be around her often. He may have even brooded about being alone. He wrote in one of his notebooks that, on his birthday, he "walked about by moonlight in the evening. Wondered what woman, if any, I should be thinking about in five years' time" (Hardy, F. 65).

Nine years later in 1874, Hardy married Emma Lavinia Gifford, ending his loneliness. One gets the feeling that Hardy did not feel as strongly for Emma as Emma did for him, but he wanted to marry someone, so he chose her. His cousin Tryphena Sparks, with whom Hardy had a very close relationship, perhaps even physical at one time, was being courted by a businessman from Topsham while Hardy was meeting Emma. This, in addition to Tryphena's mother's protests, would not permit the lovers to wed (Millgate 106-7). Emma recorded her first sight of Hardy with a sense of destiny and seemed determined that she would marry him.

Hardy's time with Emma reflected his childhood life with women, because she was a take-charge kind of person. Emma controlled Hardy so much that she eventually

grew tired of being near him, causing her to lock herself in their attic for weeks at a time just to keep away from him. She complained when he wrote *Far From the Madding Crowd* without her to recopy and edit it. He knew she would not approve of some of the subject matter and its being placed in a rural setting, so he kept it from her (Jekel 60). When Hardy made some unconventional remarks about Christianity during a dinner party, she took it upon herself to apologize to all the guests and implore them not to hold it against her husband (Kay-Robinson 123). Emma did not adhere to the Victorian view that a woman should stand by her husband and defend him if needed, nor did she allow Hardy to be the man of the household. An anecdote surfaced that when the servants were not treating the horses as they ought, Emma scolded them right there in the streets. She took over Hardy's job of managing the manservants and the stables as well as assert herself outside the home, which was also Hardy's job as society saw the situation.

The Hardys had difficulty in the bedroom; they longed for but were unable to have children. Their personal accounts of their honeymoon seem sad and disappointed. From what scholars know of Hardy, rather, that he was easily infatuated by women and perhaps he had a sexual relationship with his cousin Tryphena, it leads to speculation that Emma may have presented the problems in bed. It is when she begins to lock herself in the attic that a deeper problem emerged. Emma did not have a strong sexual desire; Hardy, stemming from his infatuations as a youth to his relationships in his adulthood probably did. As Sue Bridehead hides in another bedroom from her husband in *Jude the Obscure*, so does Emma from Hardy in their attic. Sue kept away from her husband so that she would not have to sleep with him; the same could be true for Emma Hardy.

Emma held sway over her husband because she was not very interested in sex, providing yet another way in which Emma controlled Hardy. She took the lead in

issues that he should address (the mistreatment of the horses) and thought she ought to be party to his novels as much as he was. When complaining about not being allowed to help with *Far From the Madding Crowd*, she objected, "Your novel sometimes seems like a child, all your own and none of me" (Jekel 60). In this statement, she implied that she should have a say in the novel and reminded him that they had no children, perhaps trying to be manipulative and engender sympathy from him. Since they had no children, he should let her participate in his written progeny.

Hardy possessed an overall idea of women as a result of his mother, sister, and Emma. Since they controlled him in many ways, they endowed Hardy with the propensity to have uncomfortable feelings around independent women. His family, unknowingly, might have been the first cause for his disdain for the "new" woman and furnished him with much ammunition to fight the war for control of his view of society. Emma began the relationship timid in some ways, but quickly got over her shyness and took charge of house. As their marriage progressed, she began to pull ever further away from Hardy, which surely had something to do with their lack of children, but also to assert herself even more. Hardy around this time had begun a very close friendship with Mrs Florence Henniker (not Hardy's second wife, who was also named Florence). The relationship could very well have been much more than an intense friendship, which also may account for Emma's pulling away, but the fact remains that she would not stand by her husband, again challenging the ways of the proper Victorian lady.

All of the women with whom Hardy had a strong relationship, save his second wife Florence, exhibited at least some measure of "newness." Florence presented Hardy with a traditional wife, one who would allow him to take the lead in the relationship.

What Hardy valued above all in Florence...was a gentleness,

a peacefulness, a quietness even, such as he had scarcely ever known before in his relationships with women. She was admiring, anxious to serve and to please...unlike them she had neither the beauty, the personality, nor the consciousness of superior social class to make her resentful...and assertive of her own independence (Millgate 465).

The qualities for which Hardy hungered in Emma and his special women friends he finally found in Florence. The gentle lady brought no visions of sole self-reliance or independence, revealing the traits Hardy wanted in a woman all along but was not able to find. Florence reflected the traditional Victorian values, even so far as identifying herself by her husband. Outsiders saw her adopt Hardy's temperament of "self-indulgent melancholy" (Millgate 465). His discovery, though, did not make for another characterization of women. Hardy preferred his poetry, and he had already created model women in his novels, ones that Florence imitated.



## The Victorian Woman

Victorian England experienced a tremendous amount of change, from Reform Acts for governmental practices to the further expansion of the Empire. The period began with Queen Victoria's declaration "I will be good!" and a stance on morality that the monarchy had not seen in a very long time (Arnstein 88). The period closed with traditional morals and values on their way out society's door. The concept of the proper Victorian woman persisted throughout the period, but women themselves were changing, creating the "new" Victorian woman.

Man for the field and woman for the hearth  
Man for the sword and for the needle she;  
Man with the head, and woman with the heart;  
Man to command, and woman to obey,  
All else confusion (Arnstein 191).

Alfred, Lord Tennyson voiced the separation for men's and women's duties and roles for the Victorian era in this poem. Women were to stay at home and tend to the household while men took care of business in the world. The proper lady obeyed her husband and possessed many characteristics which demonstrated her commitment to her family and to morality.

The proper, traditional woman must have a specific kind of education: a moderate one. She needed just enough to allow her to manage the household and to be interesting to suitors, and, eventually, her husband. An 1840s magazine encouraged her to know "languages, music, dancing, painting," and to have "a sound religious education" (Rees 21). This education would fit her for nothing more than to sit in parlors with her visitors and to maintain a good conversation with her husband. A lady was not meant to work. If she were to work outside the home, it would bring disgrace and embarrassment to her husband and family.

The Victorian woman must love and obey her husband, even if she barely knew him at the time of their engagement and subsequent marriage. She should remain faithful to her husband and stand by his side in everything. For a woman who aspired to marry well, she must be chaste; for men, this was not a stringent requirement (Rees 154). Her married life brought her from under the care and control of her father to that of her husband.

This Victorian woman must also be pious, which comes out of the "sound religious" training and the necessity of chastity. She was not to have anger or sexual desire, which were considered wicked feelings for a lady. Even the hint of impropriety would be disastrous. A girl not yet married must be chaperoned when walking in town. After she had been married, she still needed a companion until she reached thirty years old.

The new Victorian woman did not start out as the "new" woman. At one time, one who possessed characteristics of an unconventional woman was labeled a "Girl of the Period." As the change progressed, society named the period "Revolt of the Daughters." Finally, when it appeared that this was not just a phase, and the non-traditional woman meant to stay in Victorian England, she became the "New Woman" (Caine 134).

The new woman brought enormous change to the Victorian period. Her independence and self-reliance took away the need to define herself by the man she had married. She desired and asserted control over her own life. She lobbied for rights, such as that of the right to vote, which she eventually won. There were changes in her model behavior. She would walk unaccompanied through the streets (Calder 163). She represented everything that the model Victorian would reject, such as independent thought and the ability to decide her own future to a greater degree than choosing

between two suitors her father chose for her. Some women chose not to marry, fearing the submission to men.

## Hardy's Heroines

The following character sketches of seven of Thomas Hardy's heroines demonstrate his treatment of traditional and new women of the Victorian period. He characterized and predicted the down-fall of independent women when in relationships with men in this quote from *Far From the Madding Crowd*.

Bathsheba loved Troy in the way that only self-reliant women love when they abandon their self-reliance. When a strong woman recklessly throws away her strength she is worse than a weak woman who has never had any strength to throw away (169).

*Far From The Madding Crowd* displays Bathsheba Everdene, an independent woman who learns that she cannot stay independent for long. From *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Elizabeth-Jane Newsom and Lucetta Templeman and from *The Return of the Native*, Thomasin Yeobright and Eustacia Vye show what happens to either type of woman in relationships with suitors and husbands. The comparisons in each novel allow conclusions to be drawn of one kind's superiority to the other. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Tess presents both sides of the issue herself, making her one of Hardy's most complex and most difficult to analyze characters. Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy's last heroine, provides the final look into Hardy's mind concerning the "new" Victorian woman. The view is bleak and brutal. Though there could exist some doubts concerning Hardy's intentions in writing these cruel endings for many of his heroines, the overall themes of the novels support his selective misogyny.

### The Independent Bathsheba Everdene

Bathsheba Everdene possessed the characteristics of a new Victorian woman, but she changed her ways before the man who could take care of her left her life forever. Men described her as “handsome,” “attractive,” and “beautiful.” Her beauty attracted men to her, namely Gabriel Oak, a farmer who turned to shepherding for others when he lost his flock; Sgt. Francis Troy, an army man who broke a previous engagement and ruled Bathsheba with a less than delicate hand; and Farmer Boldwood, whose attraction to Bathsheba began when she sent him an anonymous Valentine and he discovered its author.

In refusing Gabriel Oak at the start of the novel, her haughtiness appeared. She was also very vain, looking in a mirror just to look or to practice her smile, not to change anything about her appearance (*Far From the Madding Crowd* 5). Her independence shone through, especially when she managed her uncle’s farm by herself, and led to many problems in her life. She played tricks on an older farmer in the town. She sent Farmer Boldwood an anonymous Valentine and he discovered its author. This created many problems, for she did not think of Boldwood as someone she would ever consider marrying. When it seemed that her first husband had vanished, he attempted to fill his place and become Bathsheba’s husband, which grieved Bathsheba much, but she began the fiasco by giving him reason to think she cared for him.

While in love, her independence and the proper way to live in a marriage clashed. She would not be subject to Troy’s orders, but she had to be, for he would make her. When a teenager, she had vehemently stated, “I *hate* to be thought men’s property...though possibly I shall be had someday” (*Far From the Madding Crowd* 25). As she grew older (but not much older, for she was in her very early twenties when

she first married Sgt. Troy), she wanted to be married, but was not willing to give up control.

Her life as recorded in the novel ended well, but along the way she experienced many crises, which came as a direct result of her desire to control her own life. When she began to act as a traditional, proper Victorian female ought, Bathsheba enjoyed a happier time. The changes came after her husband, Sgt. Troy, had died. Gabriel Oak, who had first approached to take her hand in marriage at the outset of the novel, once again asked for her to marry him. When the novel began, Oak had met her for only a few moments but she enchanted him. He spoke of marriage to her and introduced all the things a proper girl would be excited about and would expect in a marriage. They talked of houses, gardens, pianos, newspaper announcements, and children, all of which would incite any traditional girl to agree to marry. Bathsheba, though, looked for something that was not always included in marriage arrangements in the Victorian era: love. She refused him, lamenting the idea that a husband would “always be there” (*Far From the Madding Crowd* 26). When Oak asked her again why she would not agree to be his wife, she answered, “I cannot...Because I don’t love you” (*Far From the Madding Crowd* 27). He argued that she did not need to love him, she need only like him, but she wanted more from the relationship. Sgt. Francis Troy gave her that love she craved, or so it seemed.

Troy brought out Bathsheba’s wilder nature. She enjoyed the independence it took to be courted by Troy and the amount of talk it caused in the town. He did not court her in the manner befitting a proper lady. One of the more famous scenes from the novel involves Troy wielding his sword around Bathsheba, coming a hair’s width from injuring her. He also plucks a caterpillar from her bosom with the tip of his sword, a symbolic sexual penetration (*Far From the Madding Crowd* 167). The language of the scene indicates a sexual relationship, especially when he takes the

caterpillar off her bodice. Hardy wrote, "She saw the point glisten towards her bosom, and seemingly enter it. Bathsheba closed her eyes...she was killed at last" (*Far From the Madding Crowd* 167). In his swordplay, he also cuts a lock of Bathsheba's hair, which in Roman mythology Persephone would do when a person died. Persephone then carries the lock back to Hades so that the individual's soul could make that journey. Bathsheba, though not physically dying, died to her staunch independence that day when she allowed Troy to play games with her and then to kiss her. Hardy stated that a woman who was once self-reliant would be worse off if she lost that self-reliance than if she had not possessed it from the beginning. This rings true for Bathsheba.

During her tumultuous marriage to Troy, Bathsheba gave up much of her previous autonomy and lost much of the respect she had earned as the manager of her late uncle's farm. Troy was given to drink and to become violent. He took over from his wife and she learned to obey him, self-ruling though she had been. Bathsheba also discovered that he had been previously engaged and loved that woman a great deal more than she. His first love, Fanny Robin, died with her child, Troy's child. After Troy's death and the harrowing experiences Bathsheba had tasted as his wife, she grew more constrained and reserved. Gabriel Oak tried again to woo this still young beauty. She submitted herself to him and his guidance as her husband. He asked her to wear her hair as she had those years ago when he first met her, conjuring images of her girlhood and being someone who needed looking after.

Hardy brings Bathsheba from being a "vain and fickle" girl to being a "resourceful and enduring" woman (Guerard 66). Hardy allows her to endure because she changed her attitude from that of a New woman to that of a traditional, proper Victorian lady. She comes to recognize her place in the world of men, which is being subject to one. She learned the hard way, because she chose a man who subjugated her and beat down her will. Once she realized the error of her ways, her

life took a turn for the better and every indication is given that she and Gabriel Oak will enjoy a very happy life together. From the description he gives the teenaged Bathsheba at the start of her journey towards womanhood to the loving way they link their arms as they walk, Hardy displays a couple who will live on happily ever after, as all good, moral fairy tales do.



### The Meek Thomasin Yeobright

Thomasin Yeobright represents the traditional, and therefore good, Victorian woman in *The Return of the Native*. This “fair, sweet, and honest” woman worried about propriety and appearances. She was supposed to be married at the start of the novel and could not be wed because her fiancé procured the wrong license. Thomasin shunned the public eye and the thought of being gossiped about made her unsettled. She longed to remain respectable in her village. When she did get married, her husband was very controlling and did not allow her to have money of her own or work to earn some. Thomasin accepted this plight and, though she felt stifled, she obeyed her husband’s wishes.

Thomasin married Damon Wildev, whose very name suggests a wild, and perhaps wicked man, by Victorian standards. He marries Thomasin to spite Eustacia Vye, a woman to whom Wildev was deeply attracted (*The Return of the Native* 169). He cannot forget his attraction to Eustacia and continues to pursue her even after he and she have been married to other people. Thomasin is innocent and remains faithful to her husband, as a good Victorian woman should. Wildev, on the other hand, lives up to the double standard and maintained a relationship with another woman, Eustacia. Wildev died while attempting to save Eustacia from drowning (she was committing suicide). Thomasin bore it well; she lived then with her cousin until she married again. She remained respectable and Hardy rewarded her with a man who cherished her deeply and would take excellent care of her.

Certain names in this novel play an important part, like Damon Wildev, who is in some ways wild, and the house named Blooms-End, where Mrs Yeobright and Clym’s hopes for a happy life die. “Thomasin” is the feminine form of “Thomas,” which draws attention immediately to the author, further showing his intent on

identifying himself through her in some way. Her thoughts and attitudes reflect Hardy's where women's actions are concerned.

In wanting to remain in her home village, Thomasin exuded the contentment that Victorian women should possess. Her station in life satisfied her, which, accentuated by her relationships with men and her desire to remain respectable, contrasted greatly with the ambition of Eustacia Vye, who served as the new woman in *The Return of the Native*. Thomasin did have to deal with some difficult situations. Her first attempt at marriage was unsuccessful and subject to scandal because she came back to Egdon Heath still unwed when she had traveled solely with the design to be married. Her first husband controlled her harshly, not even allowing her the pleasures a proper woman was often afforded, such as visits from her aunt. Wildeva cheated on her with Eustacia during their courtship and after. He died, leaving her as a single mother. His death came as a result of his relationship with Eustacia, another blow to Thomasin's heart. Her misfortunes, however, prove that she is human and subject to the laws of nature. Thomasin gained contentment from her perseverance and constancy; Hardy allowed her to keep her child and to marry a man who would devote himself to her and take care of her. Though she experienced hardships in her life, the main moral taught by Thomasin's character opposes Eustacia Vye's lifestyle and shows that the proper actions taken by a woman will result in her being happy.

#### The Uncontrollable Eustacia Vye

A woman who knew what she wanted and knew how to get it, in a rather Machiavellian manner at times, Eustacia Vye played the new woman in *The Return of the Native*. She knew how absolutely beautiful she seemed to men and used it to her advantage. She asked her lover Wildeva if he had "seen anything better than that in

all your travels?" (in reference to her face) (*The Return of the Native* 69.) Clym Yeobright found her charming and distracting to the point that he willingly lied to his mother about their relationship. Hardy makes her a very sensual woman, devoting long passages to describing her appearance and emotions (Jekel 95). She embarked on elaborate schemes in order to attract men to her. She lit a small bonfire, her signal to call Wildeve, the night that Wildeve and Thomasin were to have been married in a desire to see if he would come to her (*The Return of the Native* 68). She did, in fact, know that they had not been married that day, but Wildeve suspected that she did not have that information, which speaks volumes of the type of relationship perhaps he was planning on having with Eustacia. She jealously teased Wildeve and did not fear any rumor that might put the two of them together before he had wed. After they were both attached to someone else, she did worry about being caught, but not enough to cease the meetings between them. Eustacia also played a few tricks in order to meet Clym Yeobright and to be able to see him before he could see her. She dressed up as a boy and played in the performing troupe which entertained at the Yeobrights' Christmas party. When she and Yeobright had married and Yeobright's mother had come to visit him, Eustacia did nothing to rouse him from his slumber to open the door. She waited a few moments and then looked out the door, but did not chase after Mrs Yeobright. Eustacia knew that her husband had wanted to reconcile with his mother, but she would not do anything out of her way to help her husband (*The Return of the Native* 285-6).

Eustacia also rejected religion; she relies solely upon herself to have strength in life. She uses pagan images in her pursuit of Wildeve: lighting bonfires and dancing as gypsies (Jekel 92). During the conversation between Eustacia and Wildeve, Hardy brought the image of the Witch of Endor who conjured Samuel when Eustacia signals Wildeve with the bonfire (1 Samuel 28). Eustacia even told Wildeve that she has

called him up as the witch did Samuel, showing her connection with the pagan symbols in the novel.

Eustacia's ambition to leave Egdon Heath and return to the large cities to which she had grown accustomed led her to beguile and marry Yeobright while at the same time continuing a relationship with Wildev. The passion she shared with Wildev was very strong (she recalled their being "hot lovers in our time"), but Yeobright's education gave him the necessary prerequisites to move out of the country and join in city life (*The Return of the Native* 285). While Thomasin contented to stay where she was and in the position life had placed her, Eustacia sought for a way out of Egdon Heath and the monotony of life it had brought. When she realized that her choice of husbands was not going to get her what she wanted, she attempted to get it anyway, and disobeyed her marriage vows. She spoke to Wildev of

music, poetry, passion, war and all the beating and pulsing that are going on in the great arteries of the world....That was...my youthful dream; but I did not get it. Yet I thought I saw the way to it in my Clym. ...I thought I saw a promise of that life in him (*The Return of the Native* 283-4).

Since Yeobright could not fulfill her desires, Eustacia looked for other ways to have excitement and satisfaction in her life, which did not turn out as she had planned. Hardy contrasts Eustacia's thinking with Thomasin's, who also did not have the life she expected when she married Wildev, but who bore her plight in life with honor and dignity, and she remained faithful and true to her position as a wife. Hardy presents Thomasin with happiness later in life and her allows her to keep her child, such an honor that he does not afford to the new Victorian women Tess Durbeyfield and Sue Bridehead (Jekel 104).

Hardy, as the narrator of the novel, wrote of Eustacia that "she had the passions and instincts which make a model goddess, that is, those which make not quite a model

woman" (*The Return of the Native* 71). Comparing Eustacia to a goddess reinforces her beauty and her independence, for not many goddesses would be subject to male dominance in their existences. The comparison also supports the pagan imagery associated with Eustacia. Asserting that her behavior would not a model woman make explains Hardy's use of Eustacia as a new woman of the Victorian period. Eustacia met her doom as a result of her deception; Hardy condemns that behavior. By allowing Thomasin a happy ending and Eustacia a rather unpleasant death, Hardy draws the line between acceptable and unacceptable actions and lifestyles. Thomasin, the woman who adheres to traditional values, endures some hard times, but prevails with a child and a happy marriage to Diggory Venn. Eustacia, the "not quite" proper woman, achieved her desires through scheming, and then, as Hardy means for her to, got what he thought she deserved.

### The Moral Elizabeth-Jane Newsom

Where Eustacia's wicked new woman dominated *The Return of the Native's* comment on a woman's place in her relationship with a man, Elizabeth-Jane takes over *The Mayor of Casterbridge* with her proper, traditional Victorian mannerisms. Elizabeth-Jane held the quality of respectability very highly throughout the novel, but she is sensible and prudent as well, which are other qualities proper women ought to possess, especially where money for the household is concerned. She waited on herself, her mother, and another boarder at a "respectable hotel" to help pay for their accommodations (*The Mayor of Casterbridge* 40). When later she was courted by Donald Farfrae who then turned his affections to another woman, she accepted the change gracefully and dutifully remained faithful to that woman, who happened to be her employer. She also obeys her step-father Michael Henchard and endures his verbal abuse with care for him in her heart. In attempting not to be a burden on her father after her mother had past away, Elizabeth-Jane took an honorable job and performed her task of being a companion to Lucetta Templeman very well. Following her discovery of the lies Henchard had told her, she tried to be gracious and understanding of his situation, still thinking of his happiness after he had done much to hinder hers.

Elizabeth-Jane, like Thomasin Yeobright, experiences pain in her life all at the hands of men, whether being passed up for another woman or being lied to about who really was her father. However, through it all, her value system remained in keeping with that of a sensible Victorian woman. She realized that she needed more education to be interesting to Farfrae and to make Henchard proud of her, so she set herself on learning geography, mathematics, and literature. She is the moralist of the novel. When confronted to speak opinions to Lucetta on dilemmas presented to her,

Elizabeth-Jane gives Lucetta the moral and proper route to take in her decision-making. When the novel concluded, Elizabeth-Jane has survived and was happily married. Hardy further rewards her perseverance and patience with the return of her presumed-dead real father.

Patricia Jekel names Elizabeth-Jane the representation of “the author’s viewpoint within the novel’s world” (136), allowing her to serve as a foil for the new woman Lucetta and even to express further Hardy’s opinions on the superiority of the traditional Victorian values over the rebelliousness of the new woman.

#### The Manipulative Lucetta Templeman

Lucetta Templeman, by her own admission, connived to create situations which were favorable to herself. She employed Elizabeth-Jane in order to form a perceived natural acquaintance to Henchard when they had in fact already had an attachment which was leading to marriage at one time. She came to Casterbridge with the intent of hurrying Henchard to wed her after his first wife died, but when she had succeeded in quickening his feelings for her, she became “indifferent to the achievement” (*The Mayor of Casterbridge* 161). Then, she shifted her affections to Farfrae, which the moral-voiced Elizabeth-Jane proclaimed “bad!” (*The Mayor of Casterbridge* 168). She agreed later to marry Henchard, but secretly married Farfrae instead, something only a woman who sought to control her own destiny would do.

Events came that destroyed Lucetta as a result of her schemings and manipulations of people. The townspeople performed a skimmity-ride, which involves creating likeness of two people, in most cases married, and parading those likenesses around town on the back of a horse. The likenesses on this horse, however, were those of Lucetta and Henchard, not Farfrae. Someone knew of Lucetta’s previous attachment to Henchard and chose to share that with the town. After viewing the horrible sight,

Lucetta lost her baby and eventually died of shame and the complications from the miscarriage.

Lucetta met with a tragic death when she might otherwise have been happy with her life if she had chosen the traditional road of marrying the first person to whom she agreed to be married. Elizabeth-Jane patiently allowed the men in her life to influence her decisions and she enjoyed a happy ending. These characters displayed the two types of woman during the Victorian era to an extent that one can understand that Hardy favored one over the other, the favored one being Elizabeth-Jane. When adding the comparison of Thomasin to Eustacia and Thomasin's triumph as it were, and Bathsheba, who changed her ways in order to satisfy Hardy's views on the proper woman, the reader recognizes the pattern of women who make it out of Hardy's novels alive and happy and those who cannot survive in the Victorian world and hold the beliefs they do. However, Hardy had not finished his punishment of the new woman nor his social commentary, warning those who may choose to venture into the alternate lifestyle. Tess Durbeyfield and Sue Bridehead bear the brunt of Hardy's attacks on the rebellious, independent-thinking female population.



### Tess Durbeyfield, Hardy's Enigma

Tess Durbeyfield presented the next installment of Hardy's disapproval of self-reliant women. Tess endured much at the pen of Hardy because she cannot be one type of woman or the other. Hardy creates her as an amalgam of the new and the old, the contemporary and the traditional. Through her, Hardy explains that a woman cannot have the characteristics of both types of women and still survive as such. He originally gave the *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* the subtitle "A Pure Woman," but society balked at calling the unwed mother and murderer a "pure woman." She was a fallen woman; she had a sexual encounter before she was married. She murdered her rapist, committing a crime for which she would be executed. Her life wavers between independence and the desire for a man she could love. In the end, the choices she made when she had to rely solely on herself become her downfall and leave her as one of Hardy's most tragic characters.

Tess's beauty first brought crises into her life. When she visited what she thought were distant relatives, Alec d'Urberville was extremely attracted to her from the start. He flirted, teased, and tried to woo her. She allowed him to do so to some degree. They had a picnic and he wanted to feed her strawberries. She told him she would rather feed herself,

but he insisted; and in a slight distress she parted her lips and took it in...They had spent some time...desultorily thus, Tess eating in a half-pleased, half-reluctant state whatever d'Urberville offered her (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* 70).

Her "half-pleased, half-reluctant state" relates her willingness to obey men but also her sense of propriety. Here in the novel she is a proper woman, but the strawberry incident foreshadows a dark time ahead for Tess.

D'Urberville continually attempted to make Tess love him and allow him to treat her as a lover. He found her beautiful, "the prettiest girl in the world," and

sought to kiss her as many times as they were together. His professed love, however, was not love; it was lust. He threatened her with carriage rides at break-neck speed if she would not permit him to kiss her. He gave presents to her family, manipulating her into thinking his intentions were honorable. The opportunity to sleep with her arose and he grasped it with fervor. Tess had fallen asleep in the woods after a long and arduous day. D'Urberville found and raped her. Critics have said that the incident that occurred that night was a seduction, but Hardy used rough imagery to describe the act.

Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as a gossamer, and practically blank as snow yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive; why so often the coarse appropriates the finer thus... Doubtless some of Tess d'Urberville's mailed ancestors rollicking home...had dealt the same measure even more ruthlessly towards peasant girls of their time (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* 107-8).

The "coarse pattern" and the ruthless measures dealt to peasant girls, placed in the medieval period in this passage, connote, not a seduction or consensual sex, but rape. The forcing of the strawberries into Tess's mouth foreshadowed such a violent incident. She did not want d'Urberville to feed her strawberries, yet she could not induce him to stop. Tess could not fight back when d'Urberville came to her that night in the woods, either.

This began her plight as a fallen woman, the consequences of which brought her misery and death. Tess left d'Urberville of her own accord, asserting her independence and proclaiming her distaste for him. She had an illegitimate child by him, proving to society that she had fallen. Since the child was a bastard, he could not be christened in a church. Tess christened and baptized him herself, calling him Sorrow, and easing her mind that perhaps he still may go to heaven when he died. Sorrow died that same night. They buried him without a Christian burial, though the

new parish priest told Tess that it would be just the same for Sorrow as if her were buried properly. Tess's performing of the baptism marks the beginning of her break with church doctrine, but she still wanted the religious ceremony for her child. Later on in the novel, she prevented her family from being able to stay on their land after her father passed away. She learned that they might have been able to stay on as weekly tenants, save for the fact, as she related to d'Urberville, "I am not a – proper woman" (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* 403).

Tess moved from her family to start a new life as a dairymaid. There she met Angel Clare, whom she would eventually marry. As they courted, Clare called her names of beautiful and strong mythological women, but she protested, asking him to call her only Tess. She did not know what he meant by those names, revealing her scanty education. During her time with Clare, Tess left the precepts of religion and, in a sense, lost it completely. Clare had studied theology and he and Tess discussed religion often. She adopted many of his unconventional ideas about God and she introduced much of her own. She maintained a sense of propriety, though. When she and Clare became engaged, she tried to visit his family, but was scared of what they might think of her, being a poor dairymaid. She worried so much that she never mustered the courage to introduce herself.

Tess very much desired to acquaint Clare with her sullied past; she felt she was hiding something from him. She tossed and turned within her soul during their engagement. She could not bring herself to tell Clare for she feared he would not love her after he knew the truth. On their wedding night, Clare described to Tess an indiscretion and asked for her forgiveness, which she rendered immediately. At last, she had the opportunity and the assuredness that he would understand and forgive her, too. She quietly and calmly told Clare of everything that had happened while she resided near d'Urberville. In the section Hardy aptly titled "The Woman Pays," Clare

did not forgive Tess. He accused her of being one woman before she informed him and another woman after. Clare told her, “the woman I have been loving is not you” (*Tess of the D’Urbervilles* 271). Clare held an idea of Tess – one of purity and innocence. When he learned she had lost her virginity, she seemed to him to be a different person entirely. He may not have blamed her for the incident, but he would not forgive her for it when she pleaded for forgiveness and mercy. Clare would not accept *this* Tess to be the girl he married.

Tess and Clare parted ways because Clare needed time to think about their situation. While he strove to come to grips with himself and his feelings, d’Urberville reentered Tess’s life. He still desired her as he had when they first met. In fact, he admitted that he was on the road to “social salvation” until he saw her again, tempted by her eyes and her mouth (*Tess of the D’Urbervilles* 370). He renewed his threats to her, telling her, “I was your master once! I will be your master again” (*Tess of the D’Urbervilles* 379). He manipulated her by promising to take care of her family only if she would live with him as his wife. Tess, desiring to keep her family safe, agreed to his proposal.

Clare, coming to apologize, returned to find his wife living with another man. Tess chose to free herself from d’Urberville through killing him with a craving knife. She spent her last free hours with Clare as they walked to Stonehenge, where she was captured and brought back to town to be executed for the murder of Alec d’Urberville. Her act of violence and her capture site continued to support her loss of religion; she sinned, taking another life. The journey to Stonehenge marked a kind of homecoming for Tess. Stretching out on a slab of rock, she told Clare, “you used to say...that I was a heathen. So now I am at home” (*Tess of the D’Urbervilles* 445).

Before the authorities led her away from her pagan resting place, she imparted to her Angel Clare that their happiness could not have lasted, which reflected exactly

what Hardy wished the female readers to learn. Tess embodied the traditional Victorian woman at times because she looked so innocent and had immense beauty. She also worried about propriety in her relationship to her husband's family. Her devotion to her family also showed morals becoming a proper woman. However, she boldly murdered her rapist to be free to rejoin her husband, displaying her independence and self-reliance. She only went to d'Urberville to save her family; she would have lived on her own if they had not needed her help. Clare ceased to love Tess when he no longer saw the ideal woman in her. Since she had her innocence taken away, he felt she was a different person than the one he had grown to cherish. Tess had characteristics that set her on the side of the new woman. She served as a warning to those women who would attempt to have both the old and the new outlooks on life. Hardy showed them that they could not have both worlds and still find happiness.

### The Punished Sue Bridehead

The lives of Thomas Hardy's heroines in his novels progressed into worse and worse situations and circumstances if they had any hint of a new woman characteristic in them. Hardy's final effort to chastise the new woman and control his heroines beats Sue Bridehead into submission in a way only a woman can submit in his last novel, *Jude The Obscure*. Her punishment comes from all sides: by society for not being married to her lover, by her step-son for explaining their family's plight all too truthfully, by herself for divorcing her husband when she ought to have stayed with him, and by Hardy for representing the new woman of Victorian England. The reader first sees Sue as a very pretty and intelligent young lady who tries to mind her manners and Victorian values. Yet, Sue cannot force herself to be something she is not and she finishes the novel a broken woman.

In keeping with the exhibition of rebellious characteristics, Sue's religious nature suffers as the novel progresses. The reader meets her while she illuminated a text, specifically the word "Alleluia" (*Jude The Obscure* 88). Next, she next bought two pagan figurines, one of Venus and the other of Apollo and then lied to her boardinghouse keeper, telling her they are St. Peter and St. Mary Magdalen, a sharp contrast to whom they actually were.

Sue's problems with marriage pervade the novel and become one of its most important themes. Marriage is, in all essence, a woman's submission to a man: she gives up her property (except in some circumstances), her name, and her personal identity. Sue agreed with that definition, seeing marriage as submission and slavery. She would have to submit her very spirit to her husband (Lawrence 71). Sue desired a marriage of the minds. She enjoyed the conversation and company of men; she abhorred the idea of having a physical relationship with one. She lived for a few years

with a college student who satisfied her longing for knowledge. She, however, would not allow him satisfaction, and she feared that it was her denial of herself that led to his death (*Jude The Obscure* 148).

Sue agreed to marry Phillotson without really loving him; she thought that it was best for her after she had gotten into trouble at the school for not returning before the curfew. She lived with Phillotson but early on she asked to live in a separate room. At one point, Phillotson accidentally entered Sue's room instead of his, which caused her to jump out the window in order to get away from him. She felt no attraction to him, which seems obvious from her disgust at the idea of having sexual intercourse with him during their marriage. Towards the end of the novel, she punished herself by allowing him to have sex with her, furthering the notion that the idea of sex with Phillotson only made her miserable and sickened.

Sue maintained her independence throughout most of the novel. Her determined spirit to rebel resulted in her expulsion from a girls' school, but she did not mind. She bought some pagan figurines she fancied and brought them into a boarding room which only permitted Christian icons. Her control over men excited her; she enjoyed making them love her. When Jude accused her of being a flirt, Sue told him, "...how much I feel that I shouldn't have been provided with attractiveness unless it were meant to be exercised!" She also admits that "some women's love of being loved is insatiable," which describes her very accurately (*Jude The Obscure* 205). Sue hated to think that Jude would love anyone more than her (*Jude The Obscure* 243). She has Jude mesmerized and he stays with her, endures his desire for her without any hope of fulfillment because he finds her so enchanting, as his equal and his opposite in one (Jekel 182).

Jude had very limited control over Sue, but he possessed enough to induce her to sleep with him whereas she would not sleep with her husband nor with her

“roommate” at Oxford. When confronted with the idea that Jude might return to his wife even after they had divorced, Sue cried out to him

I have nobody but you, Jude, and you are deserting me! I didn't know you were like this – I can't bear it, I can't! If she were yours, it would be different! (*Jude The Obscure* 266).

Jude replied to her, “Or if you were.” At this point, Sue knows what she must do to keep Jude to herself. She resigns herself to marrying him, saying, “Very well then – if I must I must” (*Jude The Obscure* 267). She then opens up to Jude, first touching him in a more passionate way and then kissing him like she had never before. Realizing that she has lost some of her freedom, she informs him sadly, “The little bird is caught at last” (*Jude The Obscure* 268). Even so, Jude's control over her does not stay as stringent. She puts off the marriage so much that they never do legally marry. She does, however, submit herself to a physical relationship, bearing him two children. Even before her marriage to Phillotson, Jude acted as Sue's guardian, giving her away at the wedding. She called him “father,” a reference to the control that fathers were supposed to exude over their daughters, especially where marriage was concerned.

When the time came for Sue to stand up to adversity, she found she could not. Complications arose from their not being wed and toting three children around with another on the way. Sue inadvertently led little Father Time (Jude's son by his first wife) to believe that Sue and Jude were better off not having any children at all. Father Time, called so because he looked and spoke far beyond his years should allow, hung his two step-siblings and then himself, leaving only the explanation, “Done because we are too menny” (*Jude The Obscure* 336). The strong woman could no longer sustain her strength. She grew hysterical, lost her unborn child, and never recovered her former spirit. She lamented, “I am cowed into submission. I have no more fighting strength left;...I am beaten, beaten!” (*Jude The Obscure* 342).



Sue blamed her decisions to leave Phillotson and to live with Jude unwed for the deaths of Father Time and her three children. The deaths pass judgment upon her behavior (Jekel 200). In order to chastise herself and to deal with the consequences her actions brought, she returns to Phillotson. After being back with her husband for three months, she secretly met Jude one afternoon and they kissed. Sue told her housekeeper, "I am going to make my conscience right on my duty to Richard – by doing a penance – the ultimate thing." She also referred to having sexual relations with her husband to "drinking to the dregs" (*Jude The Obscure* 394). She submits her body and her spirit to Phillotson, something she feared from the very beginning. She is no longer the independent girl; she has had her spirit broken by the results her independence wrought upon her and Jude. Thus, Sue perished in a metaphorical death, that of being conquered by Phillotson, just as Bathsheba had feared in the sexually symbolic sword scene. Another character proclaims at the end of the novel that will never find peace again unless she is in Jude's arms, which is impossible because Jude was dead.

Hardy imposed on Sue the ultimate penalty for a new woman: living with a broken spirit. Eustacia, Lucetta, and Tess all perished at the end of their stories, but Sue must endure the submission of her body and spirit to Phillotson. Hardy leaves her to bear her punishment seemingly without end because he does not write the ending of her life, where she would find peace in death. The final warning is a perpetual punishment for the new woman.

## Conclusions

Hardy wrote no more novels after *Jude The Obscure* for he had accomplished his task of commenting on the evils of independence for women in many of his works. The progression steadily moves through *Far From the Madding Crowd* where Bathsheba mends her ways before it is too late for her. In *The Return of the Native* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Eustacia and Lucetta, respectively, show the horrible fates of women who reject conventional Victorian morality and behavior. Those two novels also contain women, Thomasin and Elizabeth-Jane, who embrace society's values and live to enjoy their happy endings. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, along with much more, informs a woman that she cannot have parts of both worlds and survive. Tess was caught in the middle and paid the dear price of her life as well, and not just at her execution. Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure* exhibits a woman who actively tries to reconcile her progressive views with those that will keep Jude faithful to her and fails miserably, inducing her to change her lifestyle as well. Sue has only a superficial change, whereas Bathsheba, for whom such a change worked, changed her whole outlook and attitude.

Some may look upon Hardy as an author who desired to engender sympathy for these women. He may have been showing that they deserved to be allowed to live as they so chose. Sue Bridehead was given that opportunity and her strength failed her in the end. No "new" woman discussed in this paper, with the special exception of Bathsheba, survived their predicaments, either physically or metaphorically. Since Bathsheba survived, but only on the merits that she acquired after she became a model woman, she must have made the right decision to become the proper woman. Her life would speak to women who were not quite willing to completely assert themselves.

Bathsheba shows them that they can change their ways and enjoy a happy life as a proper Victorian wife. Bathsheba did not resign herself to the traditionalist lifestyle; she willingly chose it, seeing it as her way to be happy. Tess attempted to live with some of both types of women in her. Part of Tess's problem lay beyond her control (the rape), but Hardy created her character so that she would kill her rapist abandon her faith in God. Even so, one struggles not to feel sympathy for Tess, making her Hardy's enigma along the road of punished women.

Thomas Hardy extracted revenge on these, his created, women for all the frustrations he felt from being controlled by women. His anger and disappointment at his shyness in their presence, his inability to control Emma, and his closeness to his mother all contributed to his feelings that the new woman of Victorian England must be stopped. He criticized her to the point of killing his heroines who exuded such qualities. As the author of their lives, he had ultimate control over them and he used it to purge himself from feelings of emptiness and anger. In the only way he could, he had control over the women who had always controlled him.

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